

# FRICTION IN THE U.S. ARMY DURING IRREGULAR WARFARE

A Monograph

by

LTC Hannon A. Didier

U.S. Army

School of Advanced Military Studies



United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

AY 2014-001

**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the Department of Defense, Executive Service Directorate (0704-0188). Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

**PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ORGANIZATION.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 22-05-2014	2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis	3. DATES COVERED (From - To) JUL 2013 - MAY 2014			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  FRICTION IN THE U.S. ARMY DURING IRREGULAR WARFARE		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER  5b. GRANT NUMBER  5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S)  HANNON A. DIDIER LIEUTENANT COLONEL, USA Aviation		5d. PROJECT NUMBER  5e. TASK NUMBER  5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD 100 Stimson Ave. Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)  11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT  Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT  Recent efforts in war conducted by the U.S. Army reveals a pattern of success at traditional warfare and great friction during irregular warfare. Historic analysis confirms this trend, and reveals a dominant grammar of traditional warfare supported by a narrative reinforced throughout Army history all the way back to the American Revolution. While military tradition and doctrine highlight the dominant grammar of traditional warfare, the alternate grammar of irregular warfare is visible only when politicians force the Army to conduct operations in that manner. Doctrine and theory from other nations, although available, did not facilitate maturation of this second grammar in the U.S. Army. Opportunities existed during periods of conflict for inclusion of the irregular warfare grammar, but the Army's culture only accepted traditional warfare. The Vietnam conflict provided the most obvious opportunity for acceptance of an irregular method of warfare, but both the public and the military establishment ultimately rejected it.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS  United States Army, traditional warfare, irregular warfare, narrative, culture, Vietnam, American Revolutionary War, doctrine					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified	17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 46	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON  19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)

Reset

## MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

Name of Candidate: LTC Hannon A. Didier

Monograph Title: Friction in the U.S. Army During Irregular Warfare

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Monograph Director  
Jeffrey J. Kubiak, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Seminar Leader  
Charles M. Evans, COL, FA

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies  
Henry A. Arnold III, COL, IN

Accepted this 22nd day of May 2014 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author, and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other government agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

FRICTION IN THE U.S. ARMY DURING IRREGULAR WARFARE, by LTC Hannon A. Didier, U.S. ARMY, 46 pages.

Recent efforts in war conducted by the U.S. Army reveals a pattern of success at traditional warfare and great friction during irregular warfare. Historic analysis confirms this trend, and reveals a dominant grammar of traditional warfare supported by a narrative reinforced throughout Army history all the way back to the American Revolution.

While military tradition and doctrine highlight the dominant grammar of traditional warfare, the alternate grammar of irregular warfare is visible only when politicians force the Army to conduct operations in that manner. Doctrine and theory from other nations, although available, did not facilitate maturation of this second grammar in the U.S. Army.

Opportunities existed during periods of conflict for inclusion of the irregular warfare grammar, but the Army's culture only accepted traditional warfare. The Vietnam conflict provided the most obvious opportunity for acceptance of an irregular method of warfare, but both the public and the military establishment ultimately rejected it.

As our all-volunteer force enters a period of transition after a series of traditional and irregular wars, doctrinal changes and political realities may lead to increased acceptance of the irregular warfare grammar. The deeply rooted, traditional narrative, however, may also overpower this latest aberration and maintain the paradigm of traditional warfare firmly rooted in the Army's identity.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For Kelly, who did not find my procrastination charming in any way, but supported my disjointed efforts to defeat bad habit through sheer willpower. My mother, Jacqueline, provided insight about Vietnam from her perspective. Finally, Jack East still took his silver every two weeks in violation of good conscience.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS .....	vi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
METHODOLOGY .....	3
ORIGINS OF THE U.S.ARMY NARRATIVE, 1632 to 1783 .....	6
REINFORCEMENT OF TRADITIONAL WARFARE, 1783-1902.....	15
U.S. ARMY WARFARE IN THE 20TH CENTURY .....	21
FRICTION AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM .....	27
THE WAY AHEAD.....	39
CONCLUSION .....	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	47

## ACRONYMS

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
AEF	American Expeditionary Force
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
AVF	All Volunteer Force
CAM	Combined Arms Maneuver
CAP	Combined Action Program
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defensive Group
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
CSCT-A	Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan
DOS	Department of State
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FM	Field Manual
FSO	Full Spectrum Operations
FSR	Field Service Regulations
JP	Joint Publication
LIC	Low Intensity Conflict
MAC-V	Military Assistance Command – Vietnam
MR	Military Region
OCO	Office of Civil Operations
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OOTW	Operations Other Than War
PAVN	Peoples' Army of Vietnam

PEF	Philippine Expeditionary Force
PROVN	Program for the Pacification and Long Term Development of South Vietnam
PSDF	Peoples' Self Defense Force
RAB	Regionally Aligned Brigade
RF/PF	Regional Forces and Popular Forces
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USSOCOM	U.S. Special Operations Command
VC	Vietcong
WAS	Wide Area Security



This contemporary lesson of Vietnam directs attention back to where it belongs, on the American Revolution. It was widespread public support, though never undivided or unqualified, that made American independence feasible.<sup>1</sup>

— John Shy

## INTRODUCTION

Events that occurred during the American Revolutionary War cemented ideas that affected policy for the next 200 years. Interdependence between society, the military, and policy makers drove powerful narratives still present today. The methods used to fight and win the war that secured the Nation's independence continue to affect the military's perception of warfare. These tendencies manifest themselves through predictable operational approaches and doctrinal writings. Historically, civilian decision makers require the U.S. Army to conduct war outside of their traditional methods. The result is often an unprepared Army that is unwilling to use alternative means. Habit and tradition foster an environment in the Army that resists methods outside of narrow acceptable norms. Regardless of resistance, future requirements certainly include conduct of irregular warfare by regular Army soldiers.

Mixed military success at the beginning of the Revolutionary War led to standardization of practices by General George Washington. A series of victories using western European style methods of fighting facilitated public approval and cemented the preference of society and the military for traditional warfare. This trend of tactical success continued after the Revolutionary War and through the two World Wars. Recent struggles in our current conflicts under the Global War on Terror umbrella arguably failed to achieve decisive victories typical of previous conflicts. Historically, liberal and conservative camps generate friction on the ways and means available to employ the military.<sup>2</sup> While policy decisions certainly shape the actions of a military force in

---

<sup>1</sup>John W. Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 296.

<sup>2</sup>Christopher A. Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 196–201.

combat, this research study aims to determine the effect of military tradition as another cause for tendencies and potentials.

The perception of United States military prowess during war is significant and widespread.<sup>3</sup> Great friction, however, often appears in the U.S. Army during the conduct of irregular warfare. A case study of Vietnam affords a broad lens to understand connections between tradition, warfare, and friction. The study seeks to clarify the following research statement: The U.S. Army historically struggles during irregular warfare due to its dominant narrative of traditional warfare rooted in the Revolutionary War, its legacy of conscript wartime service, and its consistent support of traditional warfare methods in doctrine. Methods including study of systems theory, culture, and revolutionary change serve to examine this statement. Historical context including comparisons with western European militaries and the United States Marine Corps facilitate and reinforce data.

Section one of the study describes the underlying interest and purpose of this research, including the two hypotheses developed to test the research statement. It also justifies the use of the Vietnam conflict as an appropriate case study, and highlights limitations of the paper. Section two focuses on the U.S. Army and the origins of its dominant war narrative after a time of competing narratives during the Revolutionary War. Section three discusses the reinforcement of that dominant traditional narrative through a series of conflicts and political decisions in the 19th century. Section four serves as a bridge to the case study, discussing available doctrine and contemporary concepts in the 20th century as irregular warfare gained a foothold in the U.S. Army following World War II. Section four is the case study of the Vietnam conflict through the lens of the two narratives, distributed between President Lyndon B. Johnson's tenure, the Nixon Administration's involvement, and the post-Vietnam transition within the Army to the All-

---

<sup>3</sup>Rachel Maddow, *Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power* (New York: Crown, 2012), 250–251.

Volunteer Force (AVF). Finally, section five provides a conclusion, including the relevance of the findings for contemporary war and policy.

## METHODOLOGY

Our nation's latest wars motivate a series of questions aimed at the U.S. Army's conduct. A general feeling of dissatisfaction exists in the Nation's involvement with these events. The viewpoint, confirmed in opinion polls and elections, remained controversial during our recent conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Although individual interest fostered research to understand and appreciate this viewpoint, the author purposefully avoided using personal experience in recent conflicts for the study. Respected British military theorist Liddell Hart warned of this approach before advising the use of history to fill the void, stating, "In history we have bottled experience, from all the best growths, only waiting to be uncorked."<sup>5</sup> In essence, he deemed it inappropriate to use underdeveloped study and personal experience to pursue truth. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to understand the factors involved in the U.S. Army's seemingly erratic approach to irregular warfare, and to dissect the perceived difficulty through a suitable historic lens.

The starting point for the research discussion is a conceptual theory of war. Clausewitz provides us with an eloquent description to frame the phenomenon of war and its unique characteristics. Within the overarching discussion of war, scholars debate over a divergence of two separate methods, or grammars, of war.<sup>6</sup> Antulio Echevarria specifically proposed the existence of two grammars of war. The first grammar highlights operational use of annihilation or attrition against an enemy. The second grammar consists of wars categorized as guerilla warfare,

---

<sup>4</sup>Anthony Arnove, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 124–126.

<sup>5</sup>Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *The Ghost of Napoleon* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 181.

<sup>6</sup>Antulio Joseph Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17–22.

irregular warfare, or insurgency.<sup>7</sup> Echevarria's war grammar concept led to interest in the physical acts committed in war. Warfare itself, as defined by the Oxford English dictionary is "engagement in or the activities involved in war or conflict."<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this discussion, the interpretation is that warfare is the physical act of war within certain timeframe or within a certain context. As an example, Antoine-Henri Jomini describes the Napoleonic method of warfare in prescriptive detail throughout his *The Art of War*.<sup>9</sup>

Correspondingly, this study proposes that there are two grammars of *warfare* under a single grammar of war, divided into traditional warfare and irregular warfare. The traditional warfare grammar is dominant in the U.S. Army, and the irregular warfare grammar surfaces only when policy forces the military to use it. This departure point, supported by literature review, produces two pertinent hypotheses for testing. Hypothesis one proposes the existence of a metanarrative within the U.S. Army that facilitates the dominance of the traditional warfare grammar. Hypothesis two states the composition of the military institution (draft, volunteer, militia) affects how readily the U.S. Army culturally accepts and applies the irregular warfare grammar within the organization.

The search for an appropriate historical study obviously leads to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The hybrid nature of that conflict provides an exceptional avenue for research. Vietnam affords a viewpoint of the draft Army as it experienced traditional and irregular warfare. The change that occurred in operational implementation through policy in 1968 also promotes

---

<sup>7</sup>John Andreas Olsen and Martin Van Creveld, eds., *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 137–139.

<sup>8</sup>Angus Stevenson, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2000.

<sup>9</sup>Peter Paret, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Felix Gilbert, eds., *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1986), 155.

opportunity to view the military in change.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the lessons learned from this experience should manifest in both Army doctrine and practice, providing an avenue of discussion to validate or refute the two hypotheses.

There are significant research challenges for this particular study. From a perspective of data, the U.S. Army's conventional conflicts receive more attention than its irregular ones. This weights the information available towards the traditional grammar. Fortunately, significant historical documentation of the Vietnam conflict exists. Another difficult aspect is quantification of success or failure in a given conflict. Applying the scale of time to any conflict is difficult and leads to mixed results. As an example, the outcome of our recent efforts in Iraq is still uncertain. Likewise, success in World War I did not secure peace; in many ways, its outcome led to the onset of World War II and the disparate approaches that evolved.<sup>11</sup>

The purpose of this research is not to determine future U.S. international policy goals and objectives. Rather than discuss the decision of military employment, this paper analyzes methods used upon force commitment. These methods drive the study to an analysis of the draft as a mechanism for military service and society-driven decisions during war.

Finally, emotions associated with the Vietnam conflict create ambiguity and color arguments. The particular case of Vietnam often evokes great passion. Much time separates us from the Revolutionary War, and many methods serve to view its outcome and meaning. Although over 40 years separate contemporary authors and the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the topic and its effects are ever-present in society and government today.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>Richard L. Daft, *Organization Theory and Design*, 10th ed. (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2010), 13.

<sup>11</sup>Williamson Murray and Alan R Millet, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 8–9.

<sup>12</sup>Robert S. McNamara and James G. Blight, *Argument without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* (Plymouth, MA: Public Affairs , 2000), 1–8.

## ORIGINS OF THE U.S.ARMY NARRATIVE, 1632 to 1783

The first document in the Army's newly evolved doctrine set, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1, defines the Army's mission as mandated by Congress. The Army's mission, to "fight and win the nation's wars through prompt and sustained land combat", encompasses many tasks.<sup>13</sup> Before there was a national army capable of executing broad tasks from its civilian masters, colonial militia participated in a series of wars that looked much different from the preferred methods used today. Consistent use of similar military tactics on the frontier provided militia forces with an early identity in colonial society. The development of this identity led to a narrative that eventually competed with a different form of combat preferred by General Washington during the Revolutionary War. The two competing narratives still exist in the Army today. The older militia narrative, supported by values of the citizen-soldier, lost importance due to practical requirements in the Continental Army.

A lack of manpower and a desire to protect frontier citizens and property drove the formation of colonial militias in the 1600s. These volunteer organizations trained sporadically and often used tactics inconsistent with modern armies of the time.<sup>14</sup> Wholesale rejection of traditional European methods taught by mercenaries paid to train these militias produced mostly irregular tactics of assassination, raids, and crop razing. A series of small wars in Virginia and New England in the mid-17th century cemented the methods commonly employed. An outgrowth of this experience was the formation of Ranger units by colonial governments to increase operational reach and effectiveness. This method of warfare was dominant in colonial North America until militias augmented regular British forces in the early 18th century.

---

<sup>13</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1-0, *The Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 1–8.

<sup>14</sup>Robert K Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1996), 4.

The volunteer nature of these early colonial militias developed a close bond between its members and the community. A local interdependence evolved based on protection and provision. This kinship continued for decades as the frontier expanded slowly. Eventually, the increased requirement to fill state militias augmenting British forces fighting in the French and Indian War forced the colonies to use conscription for the first time. Conscription predictably brought enrollment in a traditional European military organization.<sup>15</sup> The two competing ideas of warfighting co-existed prior to the Revolutionary War. One style maintained the identity of the colonial militia, espousing tactics successful on the frontier. The newer idea consisted of the more regimented system of western European design.

Understanding the differences between these styles allows explanation of their uses and preferences. Clausewitz acknowledges the existence of a grammar of war that comprises the phenomenon without specifically defining it. In essence, this “grammar” is the manifestation of policy by other means as seen in battle. In later years, a debate over Clausewitz’s use of the term led to a discussion involving two separate grammars of war - one a conventional grammar, and the other a grammar of irregular war.<sup>16</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 1 dissects the two elements of war as *traditional war* and *irregular warfare*. The use of the term *warfare* instead of *war* is interesting in its own right, and indicates (purposefully or not) that the irregular definition is a subset of traditional war, instead of a branch of war. For the purpose of this discussion, the Joint Publication definition of traditional war, “a confrontation between nation-states or coalitions/alliances of nation-states,” describes traditional warfare. Similarly, the joint definition

---

<sup>15</sup>Walter E. Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine: From the American Revolution to the War on Terror*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 7–9.

<sup>16</sup>Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 86–89.

of irregular warfare facilitates discussion for “a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population.”<sup>17</sup>

The framework of one war grammar with two sub-grammars of warfare provides an appropriate method to discuss the state of military events on the eve of the Revolutionary War. Militias, trained initially to fight in an irregular manner, saw use in the late 1700s as part of a traditional military force. Geographic fragmentation and confusing associations with Native American tribes contrasted sharply with the western European model of state warfare at the time.<sup>18</sup> Battle occurred in a manner consistent with its adversary on the frontier. This clash of methods created friction during the initial inclusion of militia soldiers accustomed to irregular warfare. Friction increased as militia played a more prominent role while part of the British Army in North America during the Seven Years’ War.<sup>19</sup>

Founded under pressure to defend the vote of independence, the Continental Army banded together from a disparate combination of militia, volunteers, and conscripts. The integration of personalities and warfighting traditions initially created significant operational friction. Units fought in methods peculiar to their organic environment, with little control from higher command. A series of defeats over the first six months of the war dampened the spirits of many. As morale and optimism decreased rapidly, the unifying figure behind the Continental Army, General George Washington, boldly initiated two battles at the end of the year. Washington and his army were victorious at Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey during a pivotal series of events. Success using traditional warfare methods elevated his stature within the Army, and cemented his personal belief that the appropriate way forward for the military resided in

---

<sup>17</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), x, GL–8.

<sup>18</sup>Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 87–145.

<sup>19</sup>Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, 38–41.

European-style maneuver warfare.<sup>20</sup> The victories built a foundation for the narrative of traditional warfare that survives at the core of the Army today.

The victories at Trenton and Princeton began a process that shaped the fledgling Army's culture. Culture, as defined by Edgar Schein in his book, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, is "the foundation of social order that we live in and of the rules we abide by." The U.S. Army's culture fits well into one of Schein's subcategories quantified as "organizational culture."<sup>21</sup> He argues the influence of an organization's culture on an individual varies with the intensity of its actions, the length of the organization's existence, and the amount of structure present. Within these micro cultures, competing ideas often lead to friction. Within the overall construct of culture, a prevailing theme of narration often exists. Particularly strong narratives seem to trace their historic lineage back to a well-defined event or story. This event, sometimes referred to as a master plot, exists in many cultures through religious, political, or ethnic threads. Washington's victories at Trenton and Princeton, with his bold crossing of the Delaware River in winter, built a master plot for the Army's future narrative.

The symbiotic relationship between a master plot and the narrative within a culture or organization is an important phenomenon present in the early days of the Continental Army. H. Porter Abbot provides a concise understanding of the terms *narrative* and *masterplot*. Abbot defines narrative as "the representation of an event or series of events." For the purpose of this study, Abbot's second characteristic of a narrative even more applicable – one that is "loose and generally recognizable."<sup>22</sup> Within the framework of a loose narrative, masterplots may exist,

---

<sup>20</sup>David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 324–345.

<sup>21</sup>Edgar H Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 3–4.

<sup>22</sup>H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13–14.

“recurrent skeletal stories, belonging to cultures and individuals that play a powerful role in questions of identity, values, and the understanding of life.”<sup>23</sup> Certainly, General Washington provided an appropriate vehicle to grow a narrative with his victories in 1776 and 1777.

Previous beliefs and experiences of General Washington contributed to his perception of a proper Army, its composition, and its organizational culture. As a 23-year-old colonel in 1755, Washington organized a regiment along the model of British regular units. This led to friction and a high desertion rate within his organization, as militia were not yet ready to accept the methods of traditional warfare. By the American Revolution, Washington’s well-developed virtues included strong feelings about discipline, morality during war, and standardization.<sup>24</sup>

Realizing the importance of unity between and amongst his diverse group of volunteers, Washington implemented a series of reforms within the Continental Army that brought discipline to his units. The necessity to achieve parity with regular British forces and defeat them by similar means facilitated commonality among dissimilar units - in this example, the militia and conscript regulars.<sup>25</sup> Codification of this arrangement was a high priority for the commander of the Continental Army.

Washington’s acceptance and support of the Prussian advisor General Von Steuben began this transformation, resulting in a competent, disciplined fighting force that practiced traditional warfare well enough to defeat the British and secure the nation’s independence.<sup>26</sup> The fledgling nation published its first sanctioned doctrine, *Rules and Regulations of the Continental Army*, in 1778. Conceived and written by Baron Von Steuben, edited by General George Washington, and approved by the Continental Congress, this document consolidated best

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 236.

<sup>24</sup>Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 14–15.

<sup>25</sup>Daft, *Organization Theory and Design*, 14.

<sup>26</sup>Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 21–34.

practices for traditional warfare against British Army regular forces. The guide specifically prescribed infantry tactics, omitting guidance for other maneuver branches or for logistical considerations.<sup>27</sup> The doctrine effectively relegated the irregular warfare narrative to a supporting role within the Army. Militia exploits in South Carolina, as evidenced by General Francis Marion's highly successful hit and run tactics against the British in 1780, did not retain traction over the course of the war.<sup>28</sup>

The importance of Von Steuben's influence in developing the Army's narrative, weighted towards traditional warfare, deserves study. The influence of ideas and methods on the U.S. Army from western European powers during the American Revolution contributed directly to the grammar discussion of warfare, the narrative of the Army, and influences on its particular metaplot. The three dominant European militaries at the time were the Prussians, French, and British. With close cultural and societal ties to its European counterparts, the U.S. Army organization legitimized itself through a narrative of battlefield success, charismatic leadership, and structural socialization. A brief review of the British, French, and Prussian military experiences sheds light on forces influencing the U.S. Army in the late 18th century.

Study of western European armies reveals historic trends based on society and policy. Theorists such as Machiavelli, influenced by Greek and Roman writings, provided the basic underpinning for acquisition of land and wealth.<sup>29</sup> Of particular importance was the concept of mercantilism, a zero-sum economic game that shaped domestic and international policy. As Western Europe moved from a dominant pattern of city-states to statehood, military forces developed to protect local interests grew with the rise of the more efficient state system. States

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>28</sup>Louis P. Towles, *Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox of the American Revolution* (New York: PowerPlus Books, 2002), 86–97.

<sup>29</sup>Niccolo Machiavelli and Harvey C Mansfield, *The Prince* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 21–25.

exported coercion through military arms more readily than cities.<sup>30</sup> The value of the city resided in its economic power, while the ability to wield military might was a by-product of the state.

The rise in statehood eventually led to partitioning of most land in Western Europe. Expansion for resources then occurred, favoring those with the ability to travel by ship. The ensuing push to control land and reap its economic benefits became a race against a fixed commodity, and this policy promoted exportation of military might to protect new assets. Military budgets increased as the control requirement increased, and military prowess within the state system grew in value.<sup>31</sup> The dual role of militaries in Western Europe met requirements for domestic boundary protection and colonial asset possession. The ratio of energy applied to these competing roles often represented a particular nation's perceived threat to its home territory. The greater this threat, the more likely a nation to weight homeland protection over colonial security.

Great Britain's geography eventually produced an expeditionary Army capable of executing traditional and irregular methods of warfare. A lack of resources and separation from mainland Europe focused the attention of British rulers on their peripheral possessions over time. This concept was both practical and historic. The earliest example of this link is from a Roman *colonia* that existed in Colchester, Britannia, around 60 A.D. Built as a retirement enclave for loyal Legionnaires, it housed over 3,000 veterans and their families. Faced with an unacceptable cultural intrusion, the leader Boudicca led the local Iceni tribe to burn the colony and kill all inhabitants. Though Boudicca's rebellion ultimately failed, it taught the Romans an important lesson in colonization, and their approach thereafter in present-day England was generally less intrusive. The event sparked British nationalism, and likely influenced future concepts of

---

<sup>30</sup>Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 45–53.

<sup>31</sup>Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750, with a New Prologue* (University of California Press, 2011), 47–51.

colonization and military application.<sup>32</sup> India and Malaysia provide examples of this British style of colonial conquest and governance.

French military culture shared many traits with its British competitor, but France's geographic location dictated a more continental view of statehood. The need for a larger land force to both protect its borders and wage war with its neighbors initially overshadowed colonial security requirements. The French view of colonization was also different. French policy incorporated territory held in close proximity as part of its domestic sphere, while more disparate territories provided resource opportunities. The French model also used national police forces for internal control while the Army guarded the frontiers and overseas territory.<sup>33</sup> Because of this division, a close relationship between civilian and military entities developed in the colonies.

Finally, Prussian military identity differed markedly from the French and British experiences. The charismatic leader Frederick the Great instituted lasting military organizational change in the mid-1700s. The importance of military education that spanned scientific and romantic topics professionalized military elite that employed conscripts in a proficient manner.<sup>34</sup> The combination of competent leadership, trained officers, and conscript forces found acceptance in the Continental Army of 1778, as Von Steuben and Washington modeled the Army's first official doctrine on the Prussian military system.<sup>35</sup> The underlying reason for the Prussian Army's methods, however, was the requirement to fight and win a two-front war in defense of its sovereign territory. Even though the isolated geographic position of the United States produced a

---

<sup>32</sup>Nic Fields and Peter Dennis, *Boudicca's Rebellion AD 60-61: The Britons Rise up against Rome* (Long Island City, NY: Osprey Publication, 2011), 47–51.

<sup>33</sup>Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*, 124–127.

<sup>34</sup>Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 57–63.

<sup>35</sup>Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 17–22.

decidedly different set of circumstances, the Prussian model dominated doctrine and practice in the Continental Army during its infancy.

In addition to installing traditional warfighting methods throughout the Continental Army, General Washington shaped the future narrative of the U.S. Army in two other important ways. The virtue ethics of his upbringing shaped the employment of his force during combat. This trait filtered through the Army, and resulted in a relatively “clean” war from a moral perspective. Successful irregular methods used by Francis Marion and others received little publicity within the Army. The treatment of soldiers and civilians during the Revolutionary War was a topic that received much attention from public and private figures alike. Methods commonly practiced by British soldiers were harsh and cruel according to perceived ideals in the colonies. American civilian and Continental Army leaders generally embraced the value of humanity towards their adversaries.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to strong virtue ethics towards enemy combatants, General Washington also prioritized the military’s subservient role in its new government. Recently victorious and immensely popular, General Washington addressed the looming threat of subversion amongst his own officers in 1783. While encamped at Newburgh, New York, the Army received word of the newly elected Continental Congress’s inability to pay salaries for wartime service. As he unfolded a note written by a supportive congressman, Washington paused to adjust his new reading glasses and instead lamented, “Gentlemen, you must pardon me. I have grown grey in your service and now find myself growing blind as well.”<sup>37</sup> A short statement from the Continental Army’s leader cemented the U.S. Army’s virtues of loyalty and subordination to civilian control.

---

<sup>36</sup>Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 375–378.

<sup>37</sup>A. J. Schenkman, *Washington’s Headquarters in Newburgh: Home to a Revolution* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2009), 445.

Organizational culture of the U.S. Army, previously conflicted between its volunteer militia roots and its conscript-dominated traditional warfare requirements, tilted more towards the traditional warfare views of their charismatic leader. Although competing practices served to facilitate discussion, the science used to win battles using conventional tactics was easily quantifiable and culturally acceptable.<sup>38</sup> In essence, Washington served to link his view of the Army's organizational culture to its methods of warfighting in the traditional manner, which was often at odds with irregular methods common at the time. The ideology of fair and just actions in combat by the military under civilian control supported science applied to this traditional warfare, manifested in *Rules and Regulations of the Continental Army*. The grammar supporting a traditional warfare narrative linked fairness and just acts expected of a democratic nation's Army.

Washington's version of the traditional warfare narrative for the Continental Army received decreasing competition from the irregular warfare narrative. Existence of a master plot certainly enabled socialization of a given narrative, and fostered creation of that narrative based on fact and fiction. Secondary socialization occurred in the discussion of military values, narrative, and identity. Internalization of ideas over time molded a belief pattern contained within the institution, as captured in *Rules and Regulations*.<sup>39</sup>

#### REINFORCEMENT OF TRADITIONAL WARFARE, 1783-1902

As the Army downsized after its successful struggle against the British for independence, government and society debated its role and mission. An ephemeral return to pre-independence militia narrative contrasted with the beliefs of General Washington. Any question of the Army's dominant narrative ended after the outcome of the War of 1812 and the acceptance of the French

---

<sup>38</sup>Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 231–233.

<sup>39</sup>Peter L. Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 129–147.

Combat Method (FCM). The Army summarily adopted the tactics espoused by the French in the early 19th century, completing the paradigm shift from colonial militia practices to western European military norms. A new normal science of warfare for the U.S. was established.<sup>40</sup>

Two reasons favored acceptance of French method. First, Napoleon Bonaparte won on the battlefields of Europe at a time when the United States struggled to maintain its independence from Great Britain. Second, the U.S. was unwilling to model itself after Great Britain, its perceived enemy. French military texts were readily available, and the United States Military Academy embraced FCM tactics.<sup>41</sup>

The perceived requirement of territorial defense against the threat of European (British) aggression pulled the Army away from its militia model and towards an all-volunteer standing force. The Army's tactics and methods during this time consisted of a scientific approach to warfare reinforced by French victories during Napoleon's conquests. Sir Winfield Scott added credibility when he applied those methods successfully against the British during the War of 1812. The cultural imprint and closeness with France during this period cemented the style and identity of the U.S. Army.<sup>42</sup>

Successful implementation of Prussian tactics during Revolutionary War, reinforced by adoption of the FCM, assured the dominance of the traditional warfare grammar within the Army. This dominance remained unquestioned through the American Civil war as generals on both sides sought decisive victory through maneuver of regular forces. Many senior officers in the Civil War served in the Mexican-American war, the first U.S. experiment with expeditionary warfare. Most

---

<sup>40</sup>Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 85.

<sup>41</sup>Michael A. Bonura, *Under the Shadow of Napoleon: French Influence on the American Way of Warfare from the War of 1812 to the Outbreak of WWII* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 7–8.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 2–10.

left that experience with a dislike for counter-guerilla operations and political considerations during combat.<sup>43</sup> Another opportunity to discuss the Army's role in an irregular environment occurred after the Union Army's experience with Reconstruction. The complex civil-military act of occupation produced many successful techniques, but the War Department failed to include any written recommendations or guidance. Similarly, the Indian Wars failed to generate formal doctrine over the 33-year span between the end of the Civil War and cessation of Indian hostilities. Instruction at West Point during the time included law classes and basic morality applicable to counter-guerilla operations, but written guidance was not available.<sup>44</sup> The closest document capturing the lessons of the U.S. Army's war against the Native Americans, *The Prairie Traveler*, was a guide for movement across the American West.<sup>45</sup> This lack of change in doctrine and practice within the U.S. Army generates study. An exploration into the cultural narrative of another branch of service, the Marine Corps, serves to contrast thoughts, opinions, and tendencies.

Built as an expeditionary force, the U.S. Marine Corps contains a markedly different narrative than the Army. Composed of only two battalions in 1775, the Continental Marines lost funding after the Revolutionary War. Congress reinstated the Marine Corps as a military organization in 1798 to facilitate order and discipline aboard Navy ships. This small all-volunteer force fought for its existence within the U.S. Navy from the beginning.<sup>46</sup> Wholesale assimilation into the Navy or the Army threatened the Marine Corps on several occasions through the 1800s.

---

<sup>43</sup>A. J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 2006), 15–18.

<sup>44</sup>A. J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History 2004), 58–61.

<sup>45</sup>Robert Cassidy, “Back to the Street Without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars,” *Parameters* (Summer 2004): 81–82.

<sup>46</sup>Allan Reed Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1991), 30–32.

Marine officers believed their inherent mission flexibility demonstrated both the capability and value of the Corps. This approach created adaptable members willing to conduct and execute a wide array of missions.

Under additional threats of disbandment, performance in the 1898 Spanish-American War and the 1900 Boxer rebellion afforded unique opportunities for the Marines to secure their role in the U.S. military.<sup>47</sup> In essence, the role of the Marine Corps remained unclear until the U.S. began experimentation as a world power. The willingness of the Marine Corps to operate within the context of either grammar of warfare increased their perceived value to government and society. The Marine Corps experienced incremental and lasting change through its struggle to survive as an institution.<sup>48</sup> The Army, unable or unwilling to incorporate data and experience outside of its traditional warfare narrative, allowed change that fit within its model but excluded that which fell outside of its narrow cultural norms.

Certainly, the impetus for a change in organizational culture existed in the Army after the American Civil War. Contemporary doctrine and pertinent examples were readily available. Within the irregular warfare grammar, the French concept of pacification gained popularity. The term, first coined in the 15th century, determines “the military-political process by which a colonial possession was consolidated following the official end of the conquest.”<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, acceptance of irregular warfare did not occur within the U.S. Army. Instead, the Civil War

---

<sup>47</sup>Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999), 8–10.

<sup>48</sup>Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 208–210.

<sup>49</sup>Michael P. M Finch, *A Progressive Occupation?: The Gallieni-Lyautey Method and Colonial Pacification in Tonkin and Madagascar, 1885–1900*, 2013, 13.

validated entrenched ideas of traditional warfare codified in General Orders 100, and lessons of pacification learned in the Indian Wars disappeared.<sup>50</sup>

The U.S. Army began the turn of the century involved in its first true counterinsurgency operation. The Philippine-American War, the unintended result of purchasing the island chain from Spain after a naval victory at Manila during the Spanish-American War, began in June of 1899 and lasted two more years.<sup>51</sup> Traditional fighting methods used in the first year changed in 1900, resembling pacification efforts of contemporary militaries. U.S. forces faced a determined insurgency that used irregular tactics of ambush, assassination, and intimidation, aimed to shape U.S. domestic policy during the McKinley era.<sup>52</sup>

Although no documented linkage is available, operational methods used by U.S. forces mirrored recommendations from French Army officers Joseph Gallieni and Hubert Lyautey, who served extensively in France's colonial possessions. The Gallieni-Lyautey method recommended a less violent approach for favorable results during the consolidation phase of an empire's conquest. Fittingly, the application was first widely used in French Indochina during the late 1800s.<sup>53</sup> These methods fostered U.S. Army success in the Philippines during the counterinsurgency. A measureable shift in public opinion occurred in 1901, however, as papers reported heavy-handed tactics on the island of Samar.<sup>54</sup> Apparently, U.S. citizens expected execution of operational methods in a manner befitting General Washington's cultural model of military norms.

---

<sup>50</sup>Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941*, 47–48.

<sup>51</sup>David Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 5.

<sup>52</sup>Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 97–98.

<sup>53</sup>Finch, *A Progressive Occupation?*, 13–15.

<sup>54</sup>Spencer Tucker, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 480.

Examination of wartime Army composition reveals a change in the makeup of forces from previous conflicts. The force sent to the Philippines consisted of one-quarter regular Army and three quarters National Guard. Due to state primacy relationships with their soldiers, National Guard units “volunteered” their service to the federal government for the Philippine Expeditionary Force (PEF). This force eventually numbered over 100,000 men. The PEF eventually embraced irregular warfare techniques. National Guard soldiers, with their dormant colonial pre-American Revolution narrative, achieved an unqualified victory during the Philippine-American War.<sup>55</sup> Although society responded negatively to wartime reports of abuse, the effectiveness of the National Guard force revealed a possible connection to frontier tradition and irregular warfare.

Thirty-three years of volunteer service through Restoration and the Indian Wars led to local application of irregular tactics, but no official reflection in doctrine occurred. Additionally, an expansionist U.S. government used its military arm to fight and win in the Philippines after a traditional force accepted contemporary tenets of pacification. Instead of irregular warfare narrative recognition, however, post-war policy changes focused on equipment and standardization. Congressional approval of the Militia Act of 1903 ensured training and equipping of the National Guard to regular Army standards.<sup>56</sup> Major military reforms in the wake of the war in the Philippines, led by Secretary of War Elihu Root, culminated in the Field Service Regulations (FSR) of 1905. The FSRs omitted irregular warfare methods successfully employed during the Philippine-American war. Instead, these directives undeniably embodied the traditional, Jominian reflection of the Army’s preferred traditional methods in combat.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, 423.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 107–114.

The traditional warfare grammar, firmly established by General Washington during the Revolutionary war and reinforced by adoption of the French Combat method, became the dominant grammar of the U.S. Army in the 19th century. As the Union and Confederacy waged war beginning in 1861, the methods employed were unquestionably traditional in nature. Both sides sought decisive battle through massed force maneuvers. The Army later dismissed the lessons and tactics used during the Mexican-American War, Reconstruction, and the Indian Wars as aberrations. In the absence of a charismatic leader after the Philippine-American War, the traditional warfare narrative resisted meaningful change.<sup>58</sup> Future battlefield success in both World Wars strengthened the position of the dominant traditional warfare narrative for the 20th century U.S. Army.

#### U.S. ARMY WARFARE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The threat of world war prompted the National Defense Act of 1916, officially re-establishing conscription. The subsequent Selective Service Act of 1917 eventually supplied 2.8 million men for the battlefields of World War I, accounting for over 65 percent of the military requirement for the war.<sup>59</sup> The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) sent to Europe in 1917 fought its traditional, conscript-fueled war with broad popular domestic support. The interwar period, and its associated technological changes, resulted in significant revision of Army doctrine. The FSR of 1941 subdivided the Army's doctrine into Field Manuals (FMs). FM 100-5, *Operations*, received the most attention. Only one paragraph of one chapter contained grammar associated with irregular warfare, mentioning considerations for guerilla operations.<sup>60</sup> The dominant traditional warfare narrative, supported by an appealing metaplot, remained central to

---

<sup>58</sup>Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity: A Platform for Designing Business Architecture*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Elsevier, 2006), 5–6, 9, 53.

<sup>59</sup>Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*, 7.

<sup>60</sup>Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 146–147.

the U.S. Army's story. The pattern of wartime-conscripted service also followed suit, with the selective service providing 15 million soldiers for World War II.<sup>61</sup>

Opportunity to contrast two military cultures within the same organization again fosters reflection. The U.S. involvement in conflicts through the 20th century saw requests for Marines in large-scale traditional wars as well as small expeditionary wars with limited objectives. Pivotal battles involving Marines at Belleau Wood in 1917 and during the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific contributed to the lore of grand battles fought in the traditional manner.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the Marine Corps experience in the Banana Wars and dozens of other small-scale counterinsurgency operations produced their *Small Wars Manual* in 1940. This document, broadly accepted into Marine Corps culture, remained in its original form until 2004. It retains value as an important reference within the organization.<sup>63</sup>

From the perspective of composition, the Marine Corps prided itself on volunteerism. With the official end of volunteer enlistment by the Wilson Administration in 1918, the Corps creatively negotiated a requirement for draftees to volunteer for their particular branch of service. This volunteer preference extended through World War II as similar techniques maintained a volunteer construct during periods of rapid growth.<sup>64</sup> The Marine Corps truly embraced its dual role in both doctrine and application of the two warfare grammars, and validated its own narrative of an expeditionary and volunteer force.

Although maneuver and conventional warfare remained the undisputed focus of the U.S. Army during both World Wars, a small but important operation occurred during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in World War II. U.S. Army Major Russell Volckmann and his

---

<sup>61</sup>Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*, 7–8.

<sup>62</sup>Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 294, 346.

<sup>63</sup>Cassidy, “Back to the Street Without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars,” 79–80.

<sup>64</sup>Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 306, 374.

Filipino fighters successfully conducted guerilla operations against the Japanese from 1942 to 1944, facilitating strategic aims while using irregular warfare methods. After the war, President Eisenhower tasked Volckmann, to write the Army's first counterinsurgency doctrine. FM 31-20, *Operations Against Guerilla Forces*, quantified irregular warfare techniques available for use against Soviet forces during guerilla operations.<sup>65</sup>

With the exception of FM 31-20, the Army after World War II remained traditional in nature. Eisenhower-era doctrine, based on maneuver, focused on warfare in the nuclear environment. This included restructuring of Army units into Pentomic divisions for efficiency in the nuclear era.<sup>66</sup> General Maxwell Taylor, serving as Army Chief of Staff from 1955-1959, understood the need to portray the Army as survivable and decisive in a nuclear war. This led to the Army's fascination with mechanized warfare, mobility, and firepower as seen in the 1954 update of FM 100-5. While highlighting the Army's capability to conduct operations during the Korean conflict, the update included little incorporation of the irregular warfare grammar.<sup>67</sup>

Finding the manpower to fill the standing Army of the post-war period began a trend that lasted for almost thirty years. The implementation of peacetime selective service in 1948, driven by the perceived threat of communism, eventually represented 58 percent of the active U.S. Army's composition by 1954. Although that number gradually decreased to 22 percent of enlistees in 1961, conscription was a powerful means to fulfill the government's requirement of a robust standing army. The size and makeup of this force correlated with doctrine of the era.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup>Mike Guardia, *American Guerrilla: The Forgotten Heroics of Russell W. Volckmann: The Man Who Escaped from Bataan, Raised a Filipino Army against the Japanese, and Became "Father" of Special Forces* (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2010), 159–168.

<sup>66</sup>Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976*, 158.

<sup>67</sup>Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 168–176.

<sup>68</sup>Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*, 8–9.

Lacking the capability to incorporate doctrine written by Volckmann, President Eisenhower authorized the formation of a Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg in 1952.<sup>69</sup> Purposefully or not, the act effectively partitioned the traditional and irregular grammars of warfare in the U.S. Army. In 1957, the 1st Special Forces Group began training soldiers in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) on tactics of irregular warfare. This all-volunteer organization specialized in training foreign militaries through the complex web of social and governmental interaction.

President Kennedy's election in 1960 signaled a policy shift towards increased military interaction through the irregular warfare grammar. Fully espousing the concept of containment, Kennedy looked to deter communist expansion in Southeast Asia and his preferred method was military engagement through irregular warfighting and civil support. Rather than accept its new role, the Army moved to compartmentalize the new requirement under Special Forces. Seeking a workaround to friction, Kennedy grew the Special Forces during his tenure. His proving ground for this force was Vietnam.

Two factors often noted as impediments to change – lack of a charismatic leader and recent success - dissolved in the early 1960s.<sup>70</sup> President Kennedy, Commander-in-Chief of a military that struggled during the Korean conflict, shaped policy and doctrine that facilitated the irregular warfare grammar promoted by Volckmann. The threat of communist expansion demanded a responsive adaptable fighting force. Opportunity existed for parallel or integrated warfare narratives. Once again, the French produced literature through combat experience that supported Kennedy's policy and doctrine on the topic. Renewed use of irregular warfare by

---

<sup>69</sup>Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army in Special Forces, 1961-1971* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), 4.

<sup>70</sup>Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking*, 5–6, 9, 53.

revolutionary groups in colonial territories as well as conflict in states bordering communist and democratic spheres promoted this revival.

Revolutionary war, considered by some as a new grammar of war at the time, served as a perceived method for worldwide communist dominance. The French, with their history of unconventional conflict, provided two theorists' interpretations of the new threat. David Galula, a French officer who fought in conventional and unconventional conflicts before immigrating to the United States, provides useful comparative definitions. He assessed the conventional style of warfare as one that "the same laws and principles hold equally true for both sides." His definition of *revolutionary war*, as expected, stated, "Most of the rules applicable to one side do not work for the other." Those opposing a revolution engaged in *counterrevolutionary war*.<sup>71</sup> Galula's final contribution of note is simplification of terms under the blanket definition of revolutionary war, with the two opposing sides termed *insurgents* and *counterinsurgents*.

Galula's counterpart in the French military, Roger Trinquier, shared battlefield experience in the French military. He left with a raw and poignant interpretation of the phenomenon, however. In his short book, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, Trinquier referred to other scholars' definitions of revolutionary war as *modern warfare*. His view of this modern form of warfare pointed to a more holistic definition, "an interlocking system of actions, - political, economic, psychological, and military - that aims at the overthrow of the established authority in a country and its replacement by another regime."<sup>72</sup> In his opinion, this form of warfare represented the future of war and required significant study. Both theorists and their definitions built improved understanding of this complex subject.

---

<sup>71</sup>David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (London: Praeger Security International, 2006), xi–xiv.

<sup>72</sup>Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (London: Pall Mall Press Ltd., 1964), 6.

Although both theorists shared many thoughts and concepts, Galula recommended counterrevolutionary methods different from the revolutionaries themselves, while Trinquier promoted mirroring of methods used by the enemy for battlefield success.

President Kennedy's death likely stymied the inertia gained by irregular warfare proponents. Although General Taylor's concepts gained traction within the organization through the concept of flexible response as an alternative to nuclear warfare, it effectively relegated irregular warfare to a method used during times of "limited means" instead of "limited objectives."<sup>73</sup> Army doctrine never captured President Kennedy's desire to weave policy through the two grammars of warfare, and momentum for change was lost as domestic issues dominated President Lyndon Johnson's agenda in 1964.

Foreshadowing of future operating tendencies in Vietnam occurred during a battle near Ap Bac in January of 1963. ARVN Special Forces and U.S. advisors conducted a company-sized airmobile assault against North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars. The battle resulted in a thirty percent friendly casualty rate, while the enemy voluntarily retreated from the battlefield. U.S. Army leadership determined the traditional warfare methods of firepower, maneuver, and seizing territory were decisive in a marginally successful battle.<sup>74</sup> The number of forces assigned to Vietnam climbed after the Ap Bac raid, reaching a strength of 23,000 by the end of 1964. Parallel narratives existed in the Army on the eve of conventional force employment, but integration of ideas between Special Forces and regular Army units prior to regular force commitment in Vietnam failed.

The U.S. Army in 1965 was a traditional warfare-based organization, focused on maneuver and firepower to survive in a nuclear confrontation against the Soviet Union. Policy

---

<sup>73</sup>Michael A. Hennessy, *Strategy in Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary Warfare in I Corps, 1965-1972* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 16.

<sup>74</sup>Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam, a History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 264–285.

initiatives of the Kennedy administration forced the Army to include irregular warfare capability. The regular Army resisted organizational change by relegating the new assignment to a separate Special Forces branch. Although doctrine included the concepts of flexible response and limited war, operational methods still reflected the traditional warfare grammar resonant in the Army system since the Revolutionary War.

Friction, as we choose to call it, is the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult.<sup>75</sup>  
— Clausewitz

#### FRICTION AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM

The U.S. involvement in Vietnam began in 1950 as a supporting role to the French.<sup>76</sup> Civilian and military advisors deployed to the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) following the defeat of the French in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu. Military interaction was limited to the role of “advisor” for the next nine years, although the total number of troops involved in the conflict by the end of 1963 numbered 14,000. The rise in popularity of the irregular warfare grammar during the Kennedy administration manifested itself in this expanded footprint. In 1964, President Johnson designated General William Westmoreland as Commander of Military Assistance Command – Vietnam (MACV) while insurgent activity increased in South Vietnam. Westmoreland’s mission consisted simply of denying the Communists control of South Vietnam.<sup>77</sup> President Johnson gave Westmoreland wide latitude to execute this vague and complex mission.

The highlights of General Westmoreland’s background as an artillery officer included combat roles in North Africa, Sicily, and France during World War II. A proud acolyte of

---

<sup>75</sup>Carl Von Clausewitz, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 121.

<sup>76</sup>Andrew F Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 3–4.

<sup>77</sup>Samuel Zaffiri, *Westmoreland: A Biography of General William C. Westmoreland*, 1st ed. (New York: Morrow, 1994), 117.

General George S. Patton, Westmoreland advanced quickly through the military ranks after a short deployment to Korea. His entire military career focused on traditional, maneuver-centric warfare. This included time as an instructor at the Army War College at Fort Leavenworth in 1950.<sup>78</sup> Predictably, Westmoreland sought to defeat the communist threat using traditional warfare methods. He viewed the advice and assist role as ineffective in stemming increasing violence throughout South Vietnam. Relegating the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to conduct counterinsurgency operations on its own, Westmoreland implemented a two-phase plan of logistical buildup and attrition of NVA regular forces through operational application of firepower and maneuver. In 1964, he requested 44 active U.S. maneuver battalions to implement his plan.<sup>79</sup>

The U.S. military commitment in Vietnam rose quickly from aid and advisors to a combat force of 95,000 at the end of 1965. Draft calls tripled as the Army grew to meet requirements imposed by the new strategy.<sup>80</sup> As the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) struggled to maintain its political and military structure, the U.S. Army initiated its campaign to defeat NVA forces operating in South Vietnam. The airmobile concept was at the heart of this operational approach. While technology and new techniques superficially embodied a new method of warfare, the concepts of firepower and maneuver reflected the doctrine of the previous eras. Developed in the late 1950s as a method to rapidly concentrate and disburse combat power on the nuclear battlefield, airmobile warfare was the Army's answer to overcoming the obstacle of terrain in a challenging environment without changing its operating principles. Division-sized

---

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 168–176.

<sup>79</sup>William S. Turley, *The Second Indochina War: A Concise Political and Military History*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 97–101.

<sup>80</sup>Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*, 10.

units received heavy augmentation from reconnaissance, transport, and attack helicopter systems to facilitate movement and firepower.<sup>81</sup>

Although the military used the airmobile concept as early as 1962, the first conventional U.S. tactical employment occurred near the Ia Drang Valley in November of 1965. A battalion-sized assault against Peoples' Army of Vietnam (PAVN) regular forces began a pattern of airmobile employment. This technique concluded with over one million service members employed in search and destroy missions.<sup>82</sup> A reliance on technology and firepower overshadowed unit interaction at the village level and techniques espoused by Galula and Trinquier. Quantification of operational success during the early conventional years often involved counting the number of enemy combatants killed in action. This historic trait of the traditional warfare grammar shares commonality with the scientific nature of Napoleonic warfare through the French Combat Method.

As the advice and assist role receded in importance from the regular Army's list of priorities, Special Operations forces previously engaged in civic action projects increasingly participated in direct action roles. Their trained Civilian Irregular Defensive Group (CIDG) volunteers shifted focus along with U.S. advisors. A powerful insurgency, composed of irregular fighters referred to as Vietcong (VC) and supported by the DRV, grew in size and determination as this shift in CIDG roles occurred. Consequently, there was no formalized unit to continue the counterinsurgency mission while Army forces were targeting NVA regulars.<sup>83</sup> The failure eroded the confidence in U.S. and ARVN forces as VC irregulars increased their terrorist attacks and targeted logistics bases across the country.

---

<sup>81</sup>Gordon L. Rottman, *Vietnam Airmobile Warfare Tactics* (New York: Osprey Publications, 2007), 22.

<sup>82</sup>Harold G. Moore, *We Were Soldiers Once -and Young: Ia Drang, the Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993).

<sup>83</sup>Kelly, *U.S. Army in Special Forces, 1961-1971*, 58–79.

Once again, a comparison with the U.S. Marine Corps experience during this time generates interesting insights. Faced with the same geographic and physical limitations as the Army, the Marine Corps chose a different operational approach in their sector. The first official regular U.S. military ground forces entered Vietnam in March of 1965 when a Marine battalion conducted an administrative amphibious landing at Da Nang. As the Marine Corps moved into the Vietnam conflict, proven doctrine and experience combined to foster a more holistic operational approach to solve complex problems.

The original mission given to Marine Corps units consisted of airfield security for three runways developed in their sectors. Realizing the need for security in the villages where enemy forces ranged U.S. positions with mortars, the Marines quickly adopted pacification techniques as the most efficient method to defeat this threat. Even as General Westmoreland instructed MAC-V forces to initiate search and destroy missions, the Marine contingent occupying the northern 25 percent of South Vietnam conducted their own strategy. I Corps termed their strategy the “balanced approach,” and its construct contained many elements present in the 1940 *Small Wars Manual*. Fearful of interservice rivalry issues, General Westmoreland tolerated this departure from his original intent and allowed an expansion of both methods of warfare from the three original airfield security rings.<sup>84</sup> At a time when regular Army forces chose traditional warfare methods, the Marines purposefully managed to resist this operational shift to maintain initial gains.

Undeterred, General Westmoreland and MAC-V conducted search and destroy missions across the South Vietnamese countryside. He continued requesting additional personnel for the next three years to achieve decisive battle through annihilation of enemy forces. In March of 1968, President Johnson finally declined Westmoreland’s request for additional soldiers. The

---

<sup>84</sup>Hennessy, *Strategy in Vietnam*, 65–81.

U.S. troop strength in Vietnam eventually reached more than 519,000 in 1968 and began a measured decline to 27,000 by 1972.<sup>85</sup> Almost two years after the initial mission change from advice and support to search and destroy, the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, collaborated with Robert Komer (Special Assistant for Pacification) to form the Office of Civil Operations (OCO). Initially staffed by USAID and CIA personnel, in 1968 the OCO became the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS).<sup>86</sup> As the new ambassador and head of CORDS, Komer worked under MAC-V for the remainder of the conflict. This alignment finally forced the military hierarchy to adequately resource political, economic, social, and infrastructure projects.<sup>87</sup> Re-emergence of the irregular warfare grammar began in earnest, and led to a decrease in friction between civilian and military proponents involved in Vietnam.

Struggling to describe friction during the phenomenon of war, Clausewitz settled on acknowledgement of its presence on the battlefield. He then stressed the importance of accounting for its effects.<sup>88</sup> The operational artist for the first three years of conventional military conflict in Vietnam, General Westmoreland, failed to identify and account for these effects. His lack of willingness to consider irregular warfare, reinforced by the Army's dominant narrative and contemporary doctrine, excluded irregular implementation from the operational approach. A weak overarching policy from President Johnson exacerbated the situation, changing the amount of influence that government exerted on the Army. As a result, civil-military relationships

---

<sup>85</sup>James H Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost Its War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 49.

<sup>86</sup>Thomas W. Scoville, *Reorganizing for Pacification Support* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1982), 44–46.

<sup>87</sup>Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 214–217.

<sup>88</sup>Von Clausewitz, Howard, and Paret, *On War*, 120.

faltering, Special Operations forces and conventional forces lacked synchronization, and traditional warfare methods produced mixed results.

Sensing this friction, the DRV cultivated a dramatic operation spearheaded by the VC in the south. The Tet Offensive in January of 1968 sought to enable a public uprising against the RVN while positioning NVA forces to maintain initiative. Achieving operational surprise, VC forces infiltrated dozens of bases and retained portions of South Vietnam for up to one month. U.S. and ARVN forces quickly regained the initiative, and the predicted spontaneous uprising failed to materialize. The Tet Offensive was an operational disaster for the North Vietnamese and a tactical defeat for the Vietcong. The VC suffered over 40,000 casualties, and they remained ineffective throughout the remainder of the conflict.

This apparently positive outcome for U.S. and RVN forces enabled a strategic victory for the Communist North after political and social backlash. The Tet Offensive was the turning point in the U.S. public's acceptance of the Vietnam War.<sup>89</sup> The public rejected Army and government assessments of victory. As the political necessity to extricate from Vietnam gained traction, President Johnson declined running for a second term in office. His successor Richard Nixon campaigned on a platform including the promise to withdraw the Nation from the war in Vietnam.

General Westmoreland believed he required operational freedom in Vietnam to achieve success. His disconnect between tactical actions and strategic end state proved disastrous. Westmoreland and President Johnson poorly understood the interaction between policy and the military. Clausewitz stated to his contemporaries “it makes even less sense for theoreticians to assert that all available military resources should be put at the disposal of the commander so that

---

<sup>89</sup>Turley, *The Second Indochina War*, 138–156.

on their basis he can draw up purely military plans for a war or campaign.”<sup>90</sup> Westmoreland’s failure was merely a manifestation of a systematic failure within the Army. Selectively designed to fight within the traditional warfare grammar, the commander and the organization lacked adaptability and creativity required for success in Vietnam.

Clausewitz again provides clarity on a dramatic policy shift after Tet and its impact on military operations. His definition of the conduct of war in book eight of *On War* aides in understanding: “The conduct of war, in its great outlines, is therefore policy itself, which takes up the sword in place of the pen, but does not on that account cease to think according to its own laws.”<sup>91</sup> While subordinating war under policy, Clausewitz still identified it as a unique phenomenon unto itself. This interaction between policy, the military, and society is at the heart of Clausewitz’s analysis of war.<sup>92</sup>

The policy changes after the Tet Offensive began even before Nixon’s assumption of office. Vietnamization, a term coined by Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird explaining the administration’s new plan, increased the capacity and competence of the ARVN while simultaneously withdrawing with honor.<sup>93</sup> Policy directives, the defeat of VC forces during the Tet offensive, and consolidation of an effective civil-military relationship laid the groundwork for a successful operational implementation of irregular warfare methods. As Vietnamization progressed, General Creighton Abrams assumed command of MAC-V in 1968. His three lines of effort were pacification, capacity building of the RVNAF, and interdicting supplies and equipment along the Ho Chi Minh trail. The first two lines fell within the realm of irregular

---

<sup>90</sup>Clausewitz, Howard, and Paret, *On War*, 607.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 610.

<sup>92</sup>Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 84–85.

<sup>93</sup>A. J Langguth, *Our Vietnam: The War, 1954-1975* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 535–536.

warfare, and included an open-ended timeline from Secretary of Defense Laird for completion of RVNAF capacity.<sup>94</sup>

In support of the capacity building line of effort, Abrams immediately prioritized operational and logistics support for the RVNAF. The “Midway Increase” of 1969 and the consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Plan (CRIMP) provided financial backing for heavy weapons systems and a manning increase to 1.1 million soldiers.<sup>95</sup> This economic and equipment support continued throughout the U.S. process of withdrawal. Following the successful defense of the DRV’s 1972 Easter Offensive, additional equipment procurements (designated Enhance and Enhance Plus) offset the material loss from the offensive and increase RVNAF equipment superiority.<sup>96</sup>

Military interaction with the Department of State though the CORDS realignment produced a significant advantage for operational counterinsurgency success. This unifying action facilitated shared understanding and concentrated efforts in small cities and towns throughout the area of operations. The population-centric approach resulted in RVN government control of almost 70 percent in South Vietnam by 1969. PAVN regulars assumed increasingly greater roles to assert pressure on the RVN’s civilian and military infrastructure.<sup>97</sup>

The pacification effort reinforced success of front-line units after defeating the VC during the Tet Offensive. Continued control of the countryside was the cornerstone of all facets in Vietnamization. The Pacification and Development Plan of 1969 focused on security and economic stability in the countryside, exploiting an information campaign in the wake of damage

---

<sup>94</sup>Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 22.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 26–29.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 176–177.

<sup>97</sup>J.R. Bullington, “Assessing Pacification in Vietnam: We Won the Counterinsurgency War!,” *Small Wars Journal* (March 2012).

caused by the VC during the Tet Offensive.<sup>98</sup> As security increased, exponential growth in the capacity and capability of the RVN's Regional Forces and Popular Forces (RF/PF) occurred. Finally, the training of a 3,000,000 person-strong People's Self-Defense Force (PSDF) reinforced the government's confidence by arming a substantial portion of the population.<sup>99</sup>

As changing strategy allowed greater balance between traditional and irregular warfare methods, the Marine Corps experienced increasing success in its Vietnam campaign. Their Combined Action Program (CAP), matching a Marine infantry squad with a local force platoon, served as a model imitated successfully throughout the theater as Vietnamization gained popularity.<sup>100</sup> Although the Vietnam experience was costly for the Marine Corps, historians generally view their actions in Military Region (MR) 1 more favorably than areas assigned to the U.S. Army.

Doctrine in the late 1960s finally began to reflect lessons learned from the Vietnam advisory years. A series of manuals supporting this initiative, including FM 100-20 (Internal Defense and Development), FM 31-23 (Stability Operations), FM 31-16 (Counterguerrilla Operations), and FM 41-10 (Civil Affairs Operations), were published between 1967 and 1969.<sup>101</sup> This new doctrine afforded military leaders a tangible avenue to link operations with CORDS activities.

Other irregular methods produced results in Vietnam. A controversial program named Phoenix targeted the Vietcong Infrastructure (VCI). This shadow organization controlled local villages through coercion, and facilitated logistics support and shelter for VC and NVA soldiers.

---

<sup>98</sup>Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 56–58.

<sup>99</sup>Robert Komer, *Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1970), 2–17.

<sup>100</sup>Cassidy, "Back to the Street Without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars," 76–77.

<sup>101</sup>Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976*, 420–434.

Phoenix developed a successful intelligence mechanism to identify the shadow organization's members and eliminate them. The questionable tactics disturbed many, but the program saw success and nested well within MAC-V's Hamlet Evaluation System.<sup>102</sup> Examination of these tactics nests well with Trinquier's recommendations from *Modern Warfare*.

The dual threat of VC insurgency and a conventional invasion from the DRV demanded a robust capability of traditional warfare methods within the RVN for intrastate security. Traditional warfare capability was an important facet of this new policy, but MAC-V faced dramatic decreases in personnel and equipment to accomplish this task. Several powerful examples of traditional warfare implementation occurred during the withdrawal period, including the Cambodian incursion, Lam Son 719, and the Easter Offensive of 1972.

The Cambodian Incursion occurred in April of 1970 to interdict supply caches along the Ho Chi Minh trail and to test the increasing competence of the ARVN. A partnered force gained tactical victories in the Parrot's Beak area of Cambodia, bolstering the capacity-building line of effort while exposing a key vulnerability of the enemy.<sup>103</sup> An unintended consequence of the operation highlighted U.S. societal influence on events in Vietnam. Surprised by perceived expansion of the war during a time of promised disengagement, the American public viewed the operation negatively. The Cooper-Church amendment, a result of the public's distaste for widening the scope of the conflict, legally restricted U.S. ground troops from entering Cambodia or Laos in the future.

Less than a year later, an all-ARVN force supported by U.S. rotary and fixed wing assets executed a raid into Laos to destroy a supply and communications hub along the Ho Chi Minh

---

<sup>102</sup>Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1999), 66–76.

<sup>103</sup>Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 81–86.

trail.<sup>104</sup> Relative success during the Cambodian Incursion fueled a desire for additional battlefield testimony to confirm ARVN prowess and capability. Unfortunately, a poor operational approach resulted in over 7,600 ARVN casualties and 107 U.S. helicopters destroyed. The continuing policy of withdrawal decreased the effectiveness of U.S. capacity-building efforts within the ARVN, and likely forced execution of an operation with immature forces.<sup>105</sup>

Perhaps the least publicized traditional battle in U.S. military history occurred in April of 1972. The Easter Offensive began with 120,000 NVA soldiers attacking along three separate axes of advance to seize key terrain in South Vietnam and attrit ARVN forces. ARVN firepower and U.S. airpower repelled a vehicle-heavy, traditional offensive that lasted three months.<sup>106</sup> The largest battle of the Vietnam War is largely unknown due to decreased American interest and the small footprint of U.S. Army soldiers at the time.

Although U.S. military troop commitment in Vietnam ended in 1973, the ARVN force trained primarily in traditional warfare methods remained to continue its defense against DRV aggression. In December of 1974, the NVA initiated a series of attacks along the DMZ to attrit ARVN forces and assess enemy military strength. Catastrophic success emboldened the DRV, and a general offensive ensued, culminating in the fall of Saigon in April of 1975. The last regular U.S. military personnel killed in Vietnam were two Marine security guards at Saigon on April 29th, 1975, one day before the war ended for the Vietnamese.

Many credit General Abrams with successfully articulating the dual grammars of warfare methods used in Vietnam. The impetus for change, however, originated from President Nixon's shift in policy. In essence, General Abrams was simply following orders. Lessons learned during

---

<sup>104</sup>Turley, *The Second Indochina War*, 11.

<sup>105</sup>Langguth, *Our Vietnam*, 579.

<sup>106</sup>Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam*, 173–175.

this difficult period of combat quickly led to significant changes in Army composition. Once again, the army denied inclusion of irregular warfare grammar in the Army's narrative.

A significant change in Army composition developed during towards the end of the Vietnam War. The Nixon administration, acting on a campaign promise to end the draft, began feasibility studies to implement an All Volunteer Force (AVF) 1971. The policy initially faced opposition by many in the Army, including General Abrams. The official narrative pitched by General Westmoreland highlighted the AVF as a vehicle to increase the quality of soldiers entering the military.<sup>107</sup> An administrative inquiry named the Butler study explored the implications of an AVF. One concern was a de-linking of the Army's bond with society. The study identified a risk of policy change, stating, "The draft serves as a vehicle for identifying the military with the society it seeks to defend."<sup>108</sup> Even though volunteer service dominated the majority of U.S. Army history, with conscription only accounting for 35 years out of the past 238, the requirement for a large standing army led to the perceived necessity of conscription. Those draft and Selective Service years covered many important military events in our history including the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.<sup>109</sup>

Even with operational success under Vietnamization, Army leadership steered its ranks back towards traditional warfare. Updates to FM 100-5 in 1976 and 1982 included the AirLand Battle concept, reinforcing decisive battle and maneuver-centric warfare. One lesson accepted after Vietnam was the importance of integrating Air Force and Naval assets in joint planning. This concept held particular importance against the Soviet threat in Europe. Counterinsurgency doctrine, however, received minimal attention and resided only in subordinate FMs.

---

<sup>107</sup>Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*, 52, 81–85.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>109</sup>Charles Evans, "Impact of Diversity on the Civil-Military Relationship" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2013), 29.

Intergovernmental operations, successfully executed through CORDS in Vietnam, received minimal attention during these updates.<sup>110</sup>

Once again, retention of successfully executed irregular warfare methods proved elusive to the Army. Parallel narratives during the Kennedy era, finally integrated through MAC-V under CORDS after 1968, predictably relented to traditional warfare doctrine in post-Vietnam updates. Lasting change occurred, however, in the transformation from conscription to the AVF. The identification of manning and equipment issues within the force is reminiscent of policy changes to the National Guard after the Philippine-American War. Similarly, the lack of irregular warfare in doctrine after using those methods in combat draws parallels between the military reforms 1903 and 1974. Alas, change to General Washington's traditional vision of warfare was ephemeral.

#### THE WAY AHEAD

A summation of the past four decades for the U.S. Army includes an undeniable return to its comfortable traditional warfare narrative. Change occurred in operations and training that increased joint service functions through the Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986. Low intensity conflicts (LICs) in Grenada and Panama, ignored doctrinally, drew little organizational interest compared to the AirLand Battle validation of Operation Desert Storm. Updates to FM-100 in 1986, 1993, and 1998 promoted decisive battle and operational art while relegating irregular warfare to one short chapter labeled Operations Other than War (OOTW), a title in direct contrast with Clausewitz's original description of war. The U.S. Army continued to increase its distance from irregular warfare with the formation of U.S. Special Operations

---

<sup>110</sup>Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 197–219.

Command (USSOCOM) in 1987, effectively removing doctrinal control of Special Forces from the Army to a separate command.<sup>111</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union precipitated an intellectual crisis in government that eventually resulted in the first doctrinal inclusion of irregular warfare grammar. Ten years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, FM 3-0 (Operations) used the term Full Spectrum Operations (FSO) and included stability operations as one of its core functions. Even though offensive operations still dominated this update, inclusion of irregular methods in the Army's keystone doctrine finally occurred. Operations in Haiti, Kosovo, and Bosnia, as well as domestic and international natural disaster response missions, reinforced the necessity of this evolution. A new irregular warfare manual developed jointly in 2006 between the Army and the Marine Corps, FM 3-24 (*Counterinsurgency*), supported the shift towards dual grammar acceptance reminiscent of President Kennedy's policies.<sup>112</sup>

Unfortunately, the doctrinal shift identified in FM 3-0 translated poorly in practice during the transition from conventional to irregular warfare during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Direct comparisons between Vietnam and our recent conflicts are controversial, as many believe each counterinsurgency develops through its own unique set of circumstances. Similarities between conduct in Vietnam from 1965 to 1968 and the first two years of OEF and OIF, however, are overwhelming.<sup>113</sup> A pertinent example is the mismanagement of the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (OHRA) during

---

<sup>111</sup> Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine*, 208–247.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 248–256.

<sup>113</sup>Lloyd C Gardner and Young, *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam, Or, How Not to Learn from the Past* (New York: New Press, 2008), 17–44.

OIF.<sup>114</sup> Lessons learned from initial failures in Vietnam, largely ignored by a generation of Army leaders, resurfaced at significant cost to national blood and treasure.

The U.S. Army of 2014 shares several traits with the Army of 1973. Adaptive leaders, tasked to conduct irregular warfare without sufficient doctrine or training in that grammar, comprise the majority of officers today. This group executed combined, interagency, and partnered operations regularly during OEF and OIF with lines of effort similar to the CORDS, pacification, and interdiction methods employed during Vietnamization. Those forces also felt the political pressure of withdrawal when tasked to perform capacity-building missions while force strengths dwindled. Economic considerations, always important in military affairs, increase in importance with funding constraints and a disinterested society. The opportunity for change is again present in the Army of today.

Unlike the post-Vietnam Army in transition, the professionalized all-volunteer force of the present struggles to define its role for the nation. The Cold War served as a strong polarizing factor for reform in the military after Vietnam, while ambiguity surrounding the nation's role in the international community currently fosters confusion. Resistance to change after the Cold War ended resulted in an intellectual lag throughout the Army about irregular warfare. Once again, many senior leaders turn toward the familiar comfort of the traditional warfare narrative with its clear objectives and scientific approach.

Recent literature does indicate some desire to continue pursuit of irregular warfare. A white paper authored by the Army Chief of Staff, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the commander of USSOCOM titled, “Strategic Land Power Task Force” includes valuable discussion on the topic. The paper advocates a whole of government approach, and cites the explicit objective of the document as examination of the “human domain”. Citing U.S. military

---

<sup>114</sup>Robert K. Brigham, *Is Iraq Another Vietnam?*, 1st ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006), 70–72.

irregular warfare examples in the past fifty years, the paper concludes, “Irregular warfare will continue to be a future of global conflict.”<sup>115</sup>

Another contemporary manuscript, titled *Skin in the Game: Partnership in Establishing and Maintaining Global Security*, provides a series of guidelines and measurements for development of partner capacity and capability. The term “engagement” describes this combination of political activities through military interaction. Many examples add reinforcement to the recommendation, including French and Dutch involvement in the Revolutionary War and President Kennedy’s original goal of Special Forces as a capacity building entity. The author stresses the importance of interagency coordination streamlining current bureaucratic hurdles while citing current programs like the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A) as models for future success. His argument, notably, is the expansion of regular Army capacity and capability building with partnered nations instead of a Special Operations Forces (SOF)-only model.<sup>116</sup> Recent Army structuring of Regionally-Aligned Brigades (RABs) with geographic areas answers this call for engagement and partnership.

Finally, the newest Army capstone doctrine, ADP 3-0 and ADRP 3-0 (*Unified Land Operations*), contains significant inclusion of both warfare grammars. To a certain extent, the traditional warfare grammar falls under the concept of Combined Arms Maneuver (CAM) while the Wide Area Security (WAS) moniker encompasses irregular warfare methods.<sup>117</sup> Recent senior Army leader decisions also indicate addition of SOF as a core competency as well as the inclusion of *engagement* as a warfighting function. The expansion of irregular warfare from the

---

<sup>115</sup>Raymond T. Odinero, James F. Amos, and William H. McRaven, “Strategic Landpower Task Force,” May 2013, 1–7.

<sup>116</sup>Jeffery E. Marshall, *Skin in the Game: Partnership in Establishing and Maintaining Global Security and Stability* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 14, 21, 28–30, 36 .

<sup>117</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011).

original FSO outline in FM 3-0 shows some staying power of ideas. Time will determine the impact of these documents on the Army's methods of warfare.

Opportunity for fundamental warfighting change in the U.S. Army after Vietnam yielded few results. Ambiguity due to lack of a perceived threat after the fall of the Soviet Union, however, produced some notable changes in doctrine and practice. Renewed focus aimed against terrorism after 2001, however, resulted in an overreliance on traditional warfare methods. A decade of dual narrative warfare once again provides opportunity for fundamental change. Even though doctrinal change may finally indicate regular U.S. Army acceptance of irregular techniques, fundamentals traced back to the Continental Army still predominate today. Even though civilian masters dictate this policy, and written doctrine reinforces current changes to warfare, wholesale acceptance is unlikely. Author Colin Gray's supposition that "war is a social and therefore a necessarily cultural activity" implicates Army culture and tradition as roadblocks to meaningful change.<sup>118</sup> The future of U.S. Army warfare, therefore, is uncertain in many ways.

## CONCLUSION

War is complex. The interaction between society, the government, and the military introduces variability into a relationship that is difficult to understand. Even though the U.S. Army often views itself as a self-contained entity within this relationship, history shows that its benefactors create inputs that determine its employment and composition. These inputs sometimes conflict with deeply held cultural beliefs and norms. This pattern of disagreement is present throughout the Army's history.

A review of history, theory, and doctrine strongly supports the first hypothesis. A metanarrative exists to facilitate the U.S. Army's preference of traditional warfare. General Washington enabled this narrative through victories at Trenton and Princeton. Prussian military

---

<sup>118</sup>Colin S Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Phoenix, 2006), 84.

practitioner Baron Von Steuben codified the grammar supporting that narrative through the Army's original doctrine manual, *Rules and Regulations*. The influence of the competing colonial militia narrative and its irregular warfare preferences faded after the Revolutionary War. Reinforcement of the traditional warfare narrative occurred during the War of 1812 and the subsequent acceptance of the French Combat Method. The paradigm shift from the colonial militia tendencies of irregular warfare to traditional western European methods was complete.

Over the course of the next century, aberrations occurred that afforded opportunity to embed the irregular warfare grammar into doctrine and practice. The Army mostly ignored these aberrations, including methods successfully implemented during Reconstruction, the Indian Wars, and the Philippine-American War. Incremental change only occurred through the traditional warfare grammar, as evidenced by the Militia Act of 1903. The Army acted as a closed system during this time, partially due to the tendencies perpetuated during the American Civil War.

Two World Wars and the nuclear era further cemented the traditional warfare grammar's dominance in the U.S. Army. Even the revolutionary figure of President Kennedy failed to instill lasting change. His solution to grow the Special Operations branch provided the regular Army with an outlet of resistance. The main doctrinal manual, FM 100-5 (Operations), changed little in the 20th century. Only when directed specifically to develop doctrine and execute operations under the grammar of irregular warfare did the Army finally relent.

The case study of the Vietnam War provides a pertinent means to assess the first hypothesis. Rejecting the narrative of Kennedy's irregular warfare grammar, General Westmoreland resorted to traditional fighting methods enabled by technology and firepower. Search and destroy operations, facilitated by the airmobile concept, restricted prolonged interaction between the Army and the population. The friction that resulted threatened military success in Vietnam, and led to a strategy shift forced by civilian decision makers embracing tenets of irregular warfare. Operational lines of effort encompassing pacification, CORDS, and

ARVN capacity building facilitated relative success under the policy of Vietnamization.

Conclusion of the war predictably brought a return to traditional methods of warfare for the Army, along with a lack of lasting organizational change or lessons learned during years of irregular conflict.

This study loosely supports the second hypothesis, predicting a direct relationship between composition of the U.S. Army and its acceptance of the irregular warfare narrative. Research on the Philippine-American War identified domestic friction during counterinsurgency operations in 1901 when actions conflicted with the Army's Revolutionary War values. That force consisted primarily of volunteer National Guard soldiers. The Vietnam War, by contrast, consisted predominantly of draftees. This coincided with an increased period of domestic U.S. social upheaval. The theoretical link between society and the military may increase this phenomenon through conscription, but historical data is scarce.

Consideration for the all-volunteer preferences of U.S. Army Special Forces and the Marine Corps warrants further research. The Marine Corps' historic mission promotes a dual narrative, and the link between the Corps' volunteer heritage and wholesale acceptance of competing narratives lends credibility to the hypothesis. The joint publication of FM 3-24 (Counterinsurgency) between Army and Marine Corps components may also show an increased acceptance of irregular warfare by volunteer forces. Similarly, historic ties between the National Guard and its colonial militia heritage create opportunities for expanded study. Perceived success of the National Guard State Partnership Program, linking National Guard units with specific foreign militaries, embraces the concept of engagement and capacity building.<sup>119</sup>

Implications of this study encompass future training, doctrine, and structure of the U.S. Army. As the nation enters a period of reflection following a decade of traditional and irregular

---

<sup>119</sup>Marshall, *Skin in the Game: Partnership in Establishing and Maintaining Global Security and Stability*, 2.

warfare, Army leadership appears intent on a return to traditional warfare. Historical issues with this approach abound. The likelihood of our government employing the Army in the irregular warfare environment is high. A characteristic of many irregular conflicts is a requirement for substantial force allocation, increasing the potential for regular Army involvement. The Army's interim approach is an expansion of its Special Forces branch. This approach is unlikely to meet force requirements during an insurgency. The branch's recent propensity to conduct direct action operations over irregular missions is also disturbing. Apparently, the Army's branch tasked to refine irregular warfare methods also encounters internal friction of competing narratives.

Evolutional change of Army doctrine in the past decade, however, includes a more holistic set of training and options.<sup>120</sup> This change may reflect comprehension of future involvement in irregular conflicts. The shift bears scrutiny, as it contains important implications for our military and our nation. Although a more balanced approach to warfare prepares the military more thoroughly for a broad spectrum of conflict, it also facilitates the use of the military tool in a more diverse manner. A decision for the Army to operate in a dual grammar construct, similar to Marine Corps methods, may occur in the future. Society must renew interest and discourse with its policy makers to enable an informed discussion about the future of its Army.

---

<sup>120</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 5.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, H. Porter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Arnove, Anthony. *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007.
- Berger, Peter L. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.
- Birtle, A. J., and Center of Military History. *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941*. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2004.
- Birtle, A. J., and Center of Military History. *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976*. CMH Pub 70-98. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2006.
- Bonura, Michael A. *Under the Shadow of Napoleon: French Influence on the American Way of Warfare from the War of 1812 to the Outbreak of WWII*. Warfare and Culture Series. New York: New York University Press, 2012.
- Brigham, Robert K. *Is Iraq Another Vietnam?* New York: PublicAffairs, 2006.
- Bullington, J.R. "Assessing Pacification in Vietnam: We Won the Counterinsurgency War!" *Small Wars Journal*, March 2012.
- Cassidy, Robert. "Back to the Street Without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars." *Parameters*, Summer 2004, 73–83.
- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009.
- Daft, Richard L. *Organization Theory and Design*. 10th ed. Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2010.
- Echevarria, Antulio Joseph. *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Evans, Charles. "Impact of Diversity on the Civil-Military Relationship." Monograph, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2013.
- Fields, Nic, and Peter Dennis. *Boudicca's Rebellion AD 60-61: The Britons Rise up against Rome*. Long Island City, NY: Osprey Pub., 2011.
- Finch, Michael P. M. *A Progressive Occupation?: The Gallieni-Lyautey Method and Colonial Pacification in Tonkin and Madagascar, 1885-1900*, 2013.
- Fischer, David Hackett. *Washington's Crossing*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Galula, David. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. New York: Praeger Security International, 2006.
- Gardner, Lloyd C, and Young. *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam, Or, How Not to Learn from the Past*. New York: New Press, 2008.
- Gat, Azar. *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Gharajedaghi, Jamshid. *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity: A Platform for Designing Business Architecture*. 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Elsevier, 2006.
- Gray, Colin S. *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare*. London: Phoenix, 2006.
- Griffith, Robert K. *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1996.
- Guardia, Mike. *American Guerrilla: The Forgotten Heroics of Russell W. Volckmann: The Man Who Escaped from Bataan, Raised a Filipino Army against the Japanese, and Became "Father" of Special Forces*. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2010.
- Hatch, Mary Jo. *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Headquarters, Department of the Army. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1-0, *The Army*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011.
- . Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011.
- Hennessy, Michael A. *Strategy in Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary Warfare in I Corps, 1965-1972*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam, a History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997.
- Kelly, Francis J. *U.S. Army in Special Forces, 1961-1971*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973.
- Komer, Robert. *Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1970.
- Krepinevich, Andrew F. *The Army and Vietnam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.
- Kretchik, Walter E. *U.S. Army Doctrine: From the American Revolution to the War on Terror*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011.

- Krulak, Victor H. *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 4th edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Langguth, A. J. *Our Vietnam: The War, 1954-1975*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002.
- Liddell Hart, Basil Henry. *The Ghost of Napoleon*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Machiavelli, Niccolo, and Harvey C Mansfield. *The Prince*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- Maddow, Rachel. *Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power*. New York: Crown, 2012.
- Marshall, Jeffery E. *Skin in the Game: Partnership in Establishing and Maintaining Global Security and Stability*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011.
- McNamara, Robert S., and James G. Blight. *Argument without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy*. New York: Plymbridge, 2000.
- Millett, Allan Reed. *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1991.
- Moore, Harold G. *We Were Soldiers Once -and Young: Ia Drang, the Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1993.
- Murray, Williamson, and Alan R Millet. *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Odinero, Raymond T., James F. Amos, and William H. McRaven. "Strategic Landpower Task Force," May 2013.
- Olsen, John Andreas, and Martin Van Creveld, eds. *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Paret, Peter, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Felix Gilbert, eds. *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Preble, Christopher A. *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- Rottman, Gordon L. *Vietnam Airmobile Warfare Tactics*. Oxford: Osprey Pub, 2007.
- Schein, Edgar H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Fourth ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Schenkman, A. J. *Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh: Home to a Revolution*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2009.

- Scoville, Thomas W. *Reorganizing for Pacification Support*. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1982.
- Shy, John W. *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990.
- Silbey, David. *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902*. 1st ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007.
- Sorley, Lewis. *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1999.
- Stevenson, Angus, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of English*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Tilly, Charles. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
- Towles, Louis P. *Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox of the American Revolution*. New York: PowerPlus Books, 2002.
- Trinquier, Roger. *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*. London: Pall Mall Press Ltd., 1964.
- Tucker, Spencer, ed. *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars: A Political, Social, and Military History*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009.
- Turley, William S. *The Second Indochina War: A Concise Political and Military History*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2009.
- Von Clausewitz, Carl, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret. *On War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World-System II Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750, with a New Prologue*, 2014.
- Willbanks, James H. *Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost Its War*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004.
- Zaffiri, Samuel. *Westmoreland: A Biography of General William C. Westmoreland*. New York: Morrow, 1994.